



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.
Governor

Judith A. Monroe, M.D.
State Health Commissioner

Indiana State
Department of Health
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Influenza Pandemic Q & A

1. What is influenza pandemic?

A: An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears or “emerges” in the human population, causes serious illness, and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Past pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.

2. How is an influenza pandemic different from a normal influenza outbreak?

A: Seasonal outbreaks of influenza are caused by subtypes of influenza viruses that are already in existence among people, whereas pandemic outbreaks are caused by new subtypes or by subtypes that have never circulated among people or that have not circulated among people for a long time. Also, pandemics do not necessarily occur during what is considered the “normal” influenza season.

3. When will the next influenza pandemic occur?

A: It is impossible to predict when the next pandemic will occur, but many scientists believe it is only a matter of time. The last pandemic was the 1968-69 Hong Kong flu, which caused about 34,000 deaths in the United States.

4. How can an influenza pandemic be avoided?

A: It is nearly impossible to avoid another influenza pandemic. Instead, plans must be developed to be as prepared as possible when a pandemic begins.

5. Are we prepared for an influenza pandemic?

A: Plans for responding to the next influenza pandemic are being developed at the state, federal, and even international levels. These plans deal with a variety of issues to determine how to make best use of available resources to protect people from infection, to care for patients, and to limit the spread of infection as much as possible.

6. How many people could die in Indiana in an influenza pandemic?

A: The severity and death rate of any influenza pandemic is impossible to predict ahead of time.

7. Is there a vaccine available?

A: A vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic, or would be available in very limited amounts. When a new vaccine against an influenza virus is being developed, scientists around the world work together to select the virus strain that will offer the best protection against that virus, and then manufacturers use the selected strain to develop a vaccine. Once a potential pandemic strain of influenza virus is identified, it usually takes at least six months before a vaccine will be widely available. If a pandemic occurs, it is expected that the U.S. government will work with many partner groups to make recommendations to guide the early use of vaccine.

8. Can antiviral medications be useful during a pandemic?

A: Four influenza antiviral medications (amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir, and zanamivir) are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the treatment and/or prevention of influenza. However, only oseltamivir appears to be effective against the H5N1 influenza virus strains currently circulating in Asia. Supplies of antiviral medication are likely to be limited and insufficient to meet the demand.

9. Are there enough resources available to handle an influenza pandemic?

A: An influenza pandemic would require a large-scale response, both in terms of personnel and material resources. A great deal of work is being done now to develop and plan for those resources, and to identify where and how they will be accessed.

10. What quarantine/isolation orders will be issued during an influenza pandemic?

A: The severity of the pandemic would determine if any such orders would need to be issued. However, the State Health Commissioner does have the authority to take such action if it is deemed to be necessary. Local Health Officers also have similar authority at the local level.

11. How can people protect themselves?

A: The same steps that individuals can take to protect themselves from seasonal outbreaks of influenza will also be critical during a pandemic. Those steps include frequent and thorough hand washing and various “respiratory hygiene” practices such as covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough. It will also be important for people to stay home from work or school while ill and to seek medical advice and care as.



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Pandemic/Avian Influenza Q & A

Q: What is avian influenza and why are health officials concerned about it?

A: Avian influenza is a serious flu virus that infects birds. When an avian virus transfers to humans, it seems to make humans sicker than a regular flu virus. The most severe past influenza pandemics may have been caused by strains of avian influenza that adapted to be able to infect humans and easily spread from person to person.

Q: What is a pandemic?

A: A pandemic occurs when a disease, such as influenza, affects the world. An epidemic affects only a community, state, or nation.

Q: Why are health officials concerned now?

A: A particular strain of avian influenza (H5N1) has become widespread in Asia, is spreading to birds in Eastern Europe, and has shown some capability to infect humans. More than 110 people in Asia have become infected with the H5N1 strain, and about half of those people have died. Influenza viruses can change, or "mutate," over time, which may result in sustained spread from one person to another.

Q: Is a vaccine available for this strain of influenza?

A: Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect against the H5N1 strain of influenza in sufficient amounts to protect any segment of the population. It takes 6 to 8 months to produce a sufficient amount of influenza vaccine to meet the needs of a national vaccination program. Vaccine manufacturers have developed a vaccine based on the H5N1 strain and are working on producing the vaccine in limited quantities. National leaders, including President Bush, have met with drug manufacturers to urge their cooperation in producing vaccines and antiviral drugs in sufficient quantities to help protect the population.

Q: Can antivirals help?

A: There are antiviral medicines, such as Tamiflu, that seem to be effective against the H5N1 strain, but those antivirals are currently in limited supply and available only by prescription.

Q: When will an influenza pandemic reach the United States?

A: Unfortunately, it is impossible to predict when the virus will change so that it easily spreads from person to person or how long it would take to reach the U. S.

Q: What are health officials doing to prepare for an influenza pandemic?

A: Worldwide, health and agriculture officials are tracking the spread of the H5N1 strain in birds, are actively culling flocks, and are limiting the movement of poultry in an attempt to slow the spread of the disease. Health officials are also aggressively monitoring influenza-like illness in Asia to see if the H5N1 virus has changed in a manner that will allow person-to-person spread.

Q: What has the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) done to prepare for an influenza pandemic?

A: ISDH has been actively preparing for a possible influenza pandemic:

- State Health Commissioner Judith Monroe, M.D. formed a Planning Committee that has prepared a state influenza response plan and that will continue to monitor avian influenza developments. The Indiana Pandemic Influenza Response Plan is posted on the ISDH Web site (www.IN.gov/isdh).
- ISDH is working with local health departments, hospitals, and other agencies to develop more detailed response plans to help prepare the State of Indiana for a pandemic.
- ISDH has increased the number of physicians who are reporting influenza-like illnesses and submitting patient samples to the ISDH Laboratories to aid in identifying the occurrence of influenza in Indiana. This reporting is also now taking place year-round.

Q: What can I do to be prepared for an influenza pandemic?

A: Remember to practice basic hygiene:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Use facial tissue instead of a handkerchief.
- Dispose of the tissue after use.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Stay home if you are ill.

In the event of a pandemic or illness in your family, you may be asked to remain at home for a period of time. It is important that you have a supply of food, regular prescription medications and any over-the-counter medications you might need to treat colds or the flu, and other supplies that you may want/need. Think of this as what you would need to do if you were snowed in for a few days.

Q: How will I know if a pandemic is likely?

A: Several steps are being taken to ensure that the public is notified about the threat of a pandemic in a timely fashion:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is monitoring avian influenza in Asia and other affected areas and is routinely updating State Health Departments.
- Dr. Monroe is creating an advisory group to continue to monitor developments and recommend appropriate ISDH action.
- ISDH will provide updates on developments as necessary and explain actions being taken in response to those developments.

Q: Should I still get an influenza vaccination this year?

A: Yes. Even though the vaccine available is not based on the H5N1 virus, the vaccine will provide protection against other influenza strains that are known to infect humans and will probably be circulating this year.

For more detailed information about avian influenza, pandemics, and what you can do to help protect yourself and your family, please visit the ISDH Web page at http://www.in.gov/isdh/healthinfo/influenza_index.htm and/or the CDC Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>.



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Pandemic Influenza Q & A for County Officials

1. What is influenza pandemic?

A: An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears or “emerges” in the human population, causes serious illness, and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Past pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss at the international, national and even local levels.

2. How is an influenza pandemic different from a normal influenza outbreak?

A: Seasonal outbreaks of influenza are caused by subtypes of influenza viruses that are already in existence among people, whereas pandemic outbreaks are caused by new subtypes or by subtypes that have never circulated among people or that have not circulated among people for a long time. Also, pandemics do not necessarily occur during what is considered the “normal” influenza season.

3. When will the next influenza pandemic occur?

A: It is impossible to predict when the next pandemic will occur, but many scientists believe it is only a matter of time. The last pandemic was the 1968-69 Hong Kong flu, which caused about 34,000 deaths in the United States.

4. How can an influenza pandemic be avoided?

A: It is nearly impossible to avoid another influenza pandemic. Instead, plans must be developed ahead of time to be as prepared as possible when a pandemic begins.

5. What steps should I take as an elected official?

A: As a leader in your community, it is important that you play a major role in preparedness efforts. You should first confirm that the county health department is developing plans to handle a possible influenza pandemic at the local level. You should also take a lead role in facilitating discussions between potential partners, such as your local health department and emergency management officials.

6. Won’t the state or federal public health agencies provide assistance during a pandemic?

A: By definition, an influenza pandemic would affect the entire world. Therefore, resources to assist any single community or region would be very limited, if available at all. That’s why it is imperative for plans to be made to deal with such a public health emergency with little or no outside assistance beyond basic guidance.

7. What factors need to be considered when making a county plan?

A: An influenza pandemic would have a significant effect on a county government's ability to continue providing certain services. A large percentage of staff could be away from work for a period of time, either because they are ill or because of requests by public health officials for people to stay home to help limit the spread of the disease. Therefore, preparedness at the local level should include plans to continue providing essential services, develop a roster of personnel needed to continue those services, and estimate equipment and supply needs to maintain those services.

8. What other issues should be considered?

A: Policies should be developed to address work responsibilities for ill essential employees and contractors. A file should also be developed and maintained of all relevant legal requirements and alternatives for operating essential services. The availability of alternate facilities should also be identified and confirmed.

9. Could quarantine/isolation orders be issued in my county during an influenza pandemic?

A: The severity of the pandemic would determine if any such orders would need to be issued. However, the State Health Commissioner does have the authority to take such action if it is deemed to be necessary. Local Health Officers also have similar authority at the local level. Possible scenarios should be discussed with your Local Health Officer.

10. How can people in my county protect themselves?

A: The same steps that individuals can take to protect themselves from seasonal outbreaks of influenza will also be critical during a pandemic. Those steps include frequent and thorough hand washing and various "respiratory hygiene" practices such as covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough. It will also be important for people to stay home from work or school while ill and to seek medical advice and care. Your leadership in promoting these simple steps can play a big role in helping to limit the spread of the disease in the event of a pandemic.



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Pandemic Influenza Q & A for Children

Q: What is a flu pandemic?

A: A pandemic happens when people all over the world get sick from a new germ.

Q: How is a flu pandemic different from a normal flu outbreak?

A: Regular flu happens every winter, but not everyone becomes ill. A flu pandemic can happen any time of year, more people get ill, and some people will get very ill and could even die.

Q: When will the next flu pandemic occur?

A: That is not known. It could happen anytime—this year, next year, or maybe in the future.

Q: How can a flu pandemic be avoided?

A: We can make plans ahead of time to prepare for a pandemic since we cannot stop it from coming.

Q: Are we prepared for a flu pandemic?

A: Many doctors and scientists all over the world have been working very hard to make sure they are ready if a pandemic begins.

Q: Could people in Indiana die in a flu pandemic?

A: Yes, some people may die, but most people will not.

Q: Is there a pandemic vaccine like there is for regular flu?

A: Not now. But scientists are working hard to make a vaccine.

Q: Are there special medicines for a pandemic?

A: There are some medicines that can help you feel better.

Q: Are there enough medicines and hospital rooms for people who would get sick?

A: Many doctors, nurses, and paramedics are busy making plans so they are ready to take care of people who get sick.

Q: What can I do to protect myself?

A: If you do get sick, you can help by coughing and sneezing into tissues, throwing them away and then always washing your hands. Your parents may also want you to stay home from school, even if you are not sick, to help stop the disease from spreading to your family.



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Pandemic Influenza Q & A for Pregnant Women/Children

Q: What special considerations should be given to pregnant women when preparing for a possible influenza pandemic?

A: Pregnancy has been shown to increase the risk for serious medical complications of influenza, especially during the later stages of pregnancy, as documented in limited studies and case reports. Women in their third trimester of pregnancy were hospitalized at a rate comparable with that of non-pregnant women with high-risk medical conditions. During the influenza pandemic of 1918, people age 20 to 34 years experienced high fatalities, and pregnant women had the highest case fatality rates.

Q: What special considerations should be given to young children when preparing for a possible influenza pandemic?

A: Young children infected with the influenza virus can become ill enough to require hospitalization, just like the elderly, although death is rare. Infants less than 6 months of age are the pediatric group at greatest risk for serious complications from influenza. School-age children often serve as a reservoir for influenza, bringing the virus home to their younger siblings and other family members. Infants, toddlers, and school-age children and their caretakers are all at increased risk for spreading influenza, and infants may shed influenza virus for up to 14 days compared to the more typical 7 days for adults.

Q: What steps can be taken to protect pregnant women and young children in the event of an influenza pandemic?

A: The same common prevention measures that are recommended during seasonal influenza outbreaks should also be taken to reduce the risk of infection during a pandemic. They include:

- Frequent and thorough hand washing.
- Covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough, preferably using a tissue, and then disposing of the tissue appropriately.
- Staying home if experiencing symptoms of illness. Ill family members can wear masks if they must interact with the public.

Q: How can vaccinations help protect pregnant women?

A: If influenza vaccine is available, pregnant women are often considered as high-risk groups, thus being eligible for limited supplies of vaccine. Generally, live virus vaccines should not be administered to pregnant women, but inactivated viral vaccines pose no problem. Vaccination can take place in any trimester. It is estimated that an average of 1-2 hospitalizations can be prevented for every 1,000 pregnant women vaccinated. One study of influenza vaccination of about 2,000 pregnant women demonstrated no adverse fetal effects associated with influenza vaccine.

Q: How can vaccinations help protect young children?

A: For children less than 6 months of age, vaccination of household contacts and out-of-home caregivers might decrease their probability of infection. Children less than 9 years of age should receive two doses of influenza vaccine at least 1 month apart. All children 6-23 months of age should be vaccinated against influenza due to their increased risk of influenza-related hospitalization. Vaccine should also be administered to all children and adolescents 6 months of age or older who have high-risk medical conditions.

Q: Can antivirals help?

A: If antiviral medication is available, there is often very limited data upon which to base decisions whether to use a specific antiviral medication for prophylaxis or treatment of influenza in pregnant women and young infants. Oseltamivir (TamiFlu) is the antiviral medication felt to be most efficacious at this time against the H5N1 strain of influenza that has been circulating in Asia and Europe. This medication is recommended to be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus (similar statement for breastfeeding mothers). The safety and efficacy of TamiFlu in patients younger than 1 year of age has not been studied. TamiFlu is licensed for treatment of influenza in patients age 1 year or older, but must be started within 48 hours of symptom onset. It is licensed for prophylaxis of influenza in adolescents 13 years and older.

Sources: Prevention and control of Influenza: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). *MMWR* July 13, 2005, Vol. 54



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Pandemic Influenza Q & A for Immunosuppressed Persons

Q: What is an immunosuppressed person?

A: An immunosuppressed person is anyone who is on cancer therapy which suppresses the immune system, is taking medication after a transplant to prevent rejection, is infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV – the virus that causes AIDS), is taking immunosuppressive medication for another disease, or has a defect of their immune system.

Q: What can immunosuppressed people do to help protect themselves from pandemic influenza?

A: All of the same protective measures recommended for the general population are also recommended for immunosuppressed people. People with suppressed immunity to diseases should protect themselves by not going places where there are crowds such as sporting events, crowded grocery stores or malls, and churches and schools. They should also avoid contact with anyone sneezing or coughing.

Q: Should an immunosuppressed person receive the inactivated influenza vaccine?

A: Influenza vaccination is the first line of defense against influenza. However, there is currently no vaccine available against any future pandemic influenza strain. We will not know what strain of influenza virus will cause pandemic influenza until the pandemic starts. After the strain is identified it will take at least 6 months to develop vaccine, so a vaccine will not be available during the early parts of a pandemic. It is recommended that you take the pandemic strain influenza vaccine when it becomes available for your use.

Q: Are there immunosuppressed people who should NOT receive the inactivated influenza vaccine?

A: Anyone, including immunosuppressed people, who has a history of severe allergy (i.e., anaphylactic allergic reaction) to hens' eggs, or a history of onset of Guillain-Barre syndrome during the 6 weeks after vaccination should not receive the inactivated influenza vaccine (flu shot).

Q: What other issues should be considered?

A: Immunosuppressed people may have a poor response to immunization. Therefore, the use of antiviral medications for prevention (if they are available) should be considered if an immunosuppressed person is likely to be exposed to people with influenza.



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Pandemic Influenza Q & A for Homeless Population/Shelters

Q: If an influenza pandemic were to occur, how should the homeless be notified and cared for?

A: Homeless people should **not** be encouraged to come to shelters. Close contact actually increases the spread of the disease. Instead, educate outreach workers ahead of time about signs and symptoms of influenza and what to watch for while they are doing normal distribution of supplies. There may be a need to increase the distribution of supplies to keep people away from the shelters. If health care providers wish to check on people in the streets, they should be accompanied by a regular outreach worker because strangers are often not trusted by the homeless population. A third person to act as a scribe and do charting would also be helpful.

Q: What should the homeless know about a possible influenza pandemic?

A: The homeless population should be aware of the threat and should be educated about symptoms and about when medical care is and is not necessary. Mild symptoms like a slight cough, runny nose, and sore throat with no fever and no difficulty breathing may not require medical attention.

Q: What should outreach and shelter workers be taught?

A: Outreach workers should know how to take temperatures and at what point to refer a person to medical care. Shelter staff should know how to identify symptoms such as a high fever (100° and over) and severe cough. They should also be taught simple steps that can help reduce the spread of the disease. These steps include:

- Encourage staff and clients to cough into tissues and dispose tissues in the trash.
- Encourage frequent hand washing.
- Hang sheets between beds if sleeping is dorm style.
- Wear gloves when picking up trash, changing bed linens, and doing general cleaning.

Q: What steps should be taken at a shelter during a pandemic?

A: In a pandemic, shelter staff should use the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage the situation. This means placing someone in charge of the whole program, and then others in charge of specific areas such as logistics, supplies, and medical care. Special consideration should be given to the following issues:

- Take care of staff mentally and physically so they will be able to continue to work under stressful conditions.
- Ask for mental health support at the shelters.
- Serve meals in shifts so people will not have to sit so close together and fewer people will be at the shelter at any one time.
- Prepare for increased security if crowd control is necessary. Use familiar people such as outreach workers or members of the homeless population if possible. Law enforcement personnel may have a negative impact.

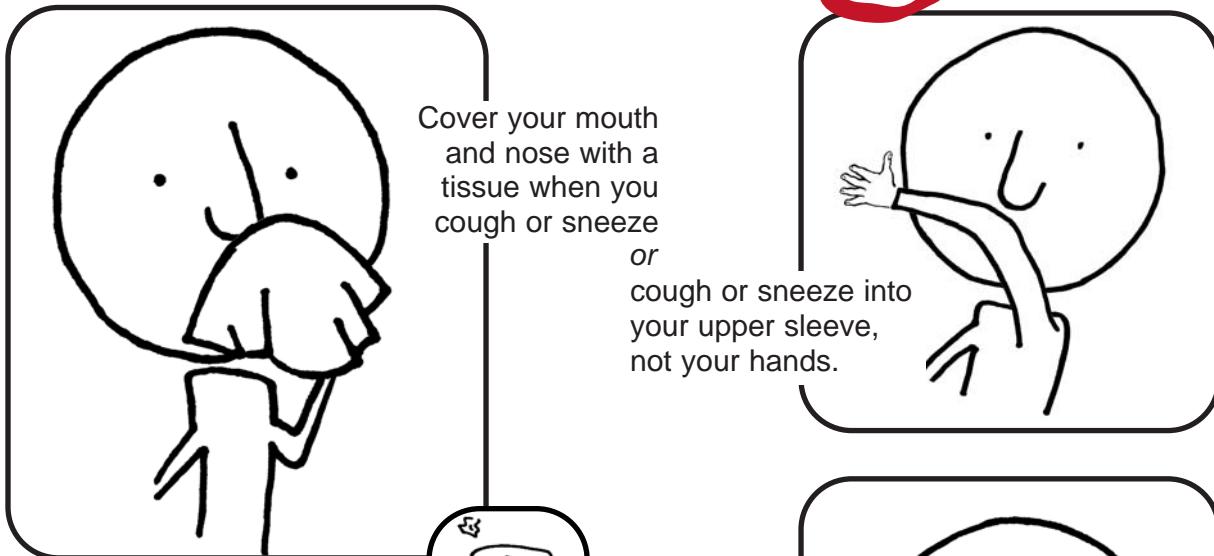
Q: What other issues need to be considered?

A: There are several potential issues that may need to be addressed and planned for in advance. They include:

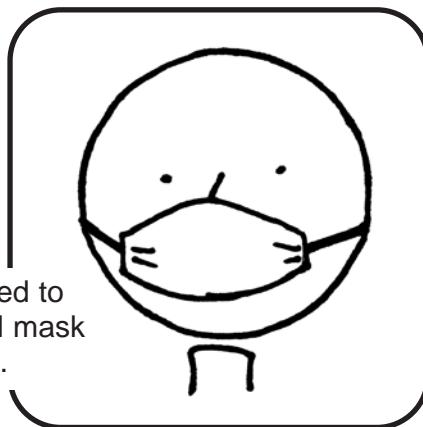
- Use outreach workers who know the areas where the most people are located to give medical care or prophylaxis on the street.
- Arrange for hand washing stations at the more populous homeless areas.
- Some homeless people have jobs, so evaluation and care may need to be provided after hours.
- People at domestic violence shelters should be visited at their shelter. They should not be asked to go out for medical evaluation and treatment.

Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick!

Cover Your Cough

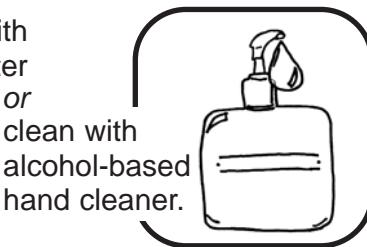


Put your used tissue in the waste basket.



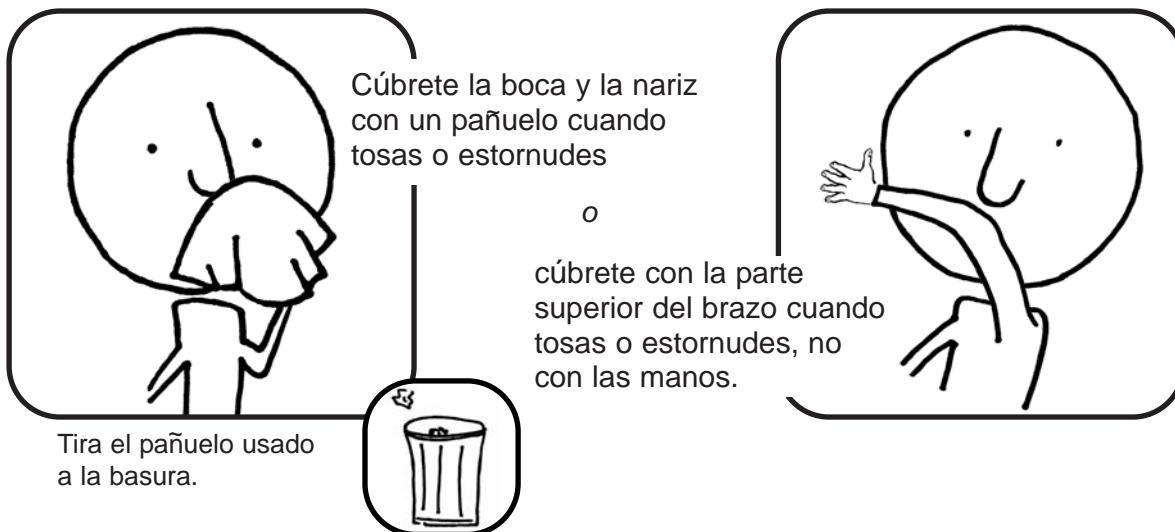
Clean Your Hands

after coughing or sneezing.



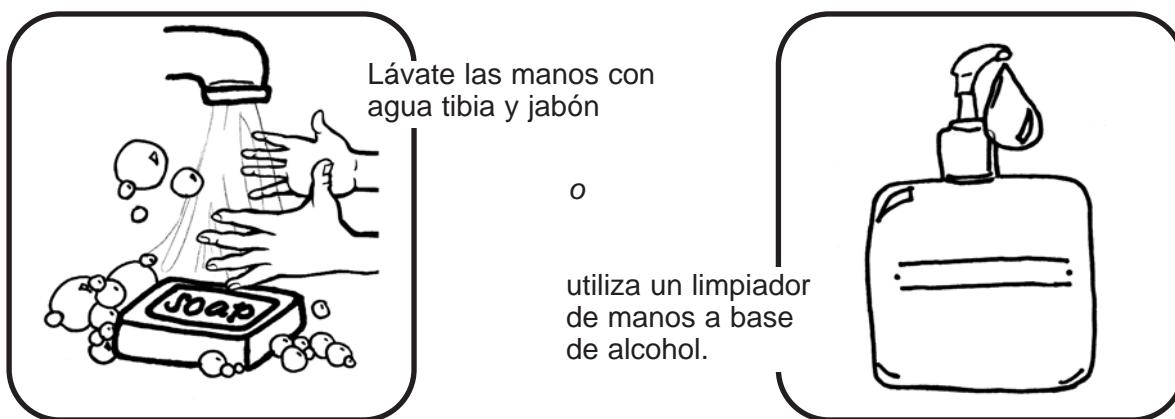
¡Detén el contagio de gérmenes que te enferman a ti y a otros!

Cúbrete al toser



Lávate las manos

después de toser o estornudar.





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For Additional Up-to-Date Information:

- Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) –
<http://www.in.gov/isdh/bioterrorism/PandemicFlu/index.htm>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) – www.pandemicflu.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic>
- World Health Organization (WHO) - <http://www.who.int/csr/en>
- Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) –
<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/index.html>
- Key Facts about Pandemic Flu
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/keyfacts.htm>
- Key Facts about Avian Influenza
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/facts.htm>
- Stop the Spread of Germs at Work
<http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm>
- Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) website (out of MN).
<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/index.html>
- DHHS Pandemic Planning Update
www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/panflu20060313.pdf

